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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000894

SIPDIS

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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR J. HARMON AND L. DOBBINS  
NSC FOR SENIOR AF DIRECTOR M. GAVIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/10/2019  
TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM ASEC ZI  
SUBJECT: BITI ON STATE OF PLAY IN ZIM

REF: A. HARARE 885  
B. HARARE 863

Classified By: Ambassador Charles A. Ray for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Minister of Finance and MDC Secretary-General Tendai Biti briefed pol/econ chief on last week's SADC Troika meeting in Maputo and the MDC's next steps.

¶2. (C) According to Biti, South African President Jacob Zuma, who as the SADC process facilitator, joined the SADC Troika leaders (Guebuza of Mozambique, Mswati of Swaziland, and Banda of Zambia) in Maputo on November 5, forcefully urged the Global Political Agreement (GPA) parties to resolve outstanding issues. Biti said that GPA negotiators (Biti and Elton Mangoma of MDC-T, Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mashonga and Welshman Ncube of MDC-M, and Patrick Chinamasa and Nicholas Goche of ZANU-PF) and GPA principals (Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai of MDC-T, Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara of MDC-M, and President Robert Mugabe of ZANU-PF) would meet later this week to discuss these issues. He added that if the parties were unsuccessful in resolving them within 15 days of the Troika Summit of November 5, Zuma would begin a 15-day mediation process.

¶3. (C) Biti thought that Mugabe would agree to the appointments of provincial governors and the swearing-in of Roy Bennett. He was less certain Mugabe would agree to the replacements of Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) Governor Gideon Gono and Attorney General Johannes Tomana. He was insistent, however, that they should go. Referring to Gono's misuse of commercial bank reserves at the RBZ, Biti said Gono was a thief. Tomana, through selective prosecutions, had also been corrupt.

¶4. (C) Acknowledging that sanctions would be an issue in negotiating with ZANU-PF, particularly in light of the SADC Communique calling for international sanctions to be lifted (Ref A) Biti said the MDC would propose formation of a sanctions committee within the context of the negotiations to discuss sanctions. The MDC would tell ZANU-PF that it

favored the lifting of sanctions on entities and the repeal of ZDERA, although it was not yet ready to make these positions public.

¶15. (C) We asked Biti what the MDC would do if the SADC process in the next 30 days did not result in the resolution of outstanding issues. He replied that the MDC would ask for a SADC Extraordinary Summit of all SADC members. If this did not produce results, he said the MDC would consider trying to dissolve the GPA and have elections scheduled. When we observed that Mugabe would likely not agree to elections, Biti agreed and said the MDC would seek further SADC intervention.

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COMMENT  
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¶16. (C) The MDC has made clear it is not going to leave government. Its "disengagement" was a once-only effort to place pressure on ZANU-PF, and it succeeded in gaining the intervention of SADC and Zuma. But the MDC does not have further leverage, and it is doubtful ZANU-PF will make significant concessions; with pressure from Zuma, however, it is likely Mugabe will resolve some of the outstanding issues such as the appointment of MDC provincial governors and (perhaps) the appointment of Roy Bennett if he is acquitted in his treason trial now set for November 11.

¶17. (C) The ZANU-PF Congress, held every five years for the

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election of ZANU-PF officials, will take place in early December. To avoid criticism from hard-liners, it is doubtful Mugabe will make any concessions until after the Congress. The bottom line is that we will continue to see foot-dragging and fitful progress -- with the MDC remaining in government. END COMMENT.

RAY